

MEASURING SOCIAL MEANING OF LANGUAGE VARIATION WITH THE RELATIONAL RESPONDING TASK

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In line with the strong empirical tradition of Cognitive Sociolinguistics, this paper sets out to study the cognitive representation of language variation using a novel method to measure language attitudes. For decades, quantitative language attitude research has known little methodological innovation (Speelman et al. 2013). Yet, in the last few years, linguists have started to use new methods originating from social psychology. Especially the Implicit Association Test (IAT) has proven to be a successful method (e.g. Campbell-Kibler 2012; Pantos & Perkins 2012; Loudermilk 2015; Rosseel et al. 2015). Despite its relative success, the IAT has a number of limitations, such as the fact that it measures the association between two concepts (e.g. 'I' and 'skinny') without controlling for the relationship between those concepts (e.g. 'I am skinny' vs. 'I want to be skinny'). The Relational Responding Task (RRT), a recently developed social psychological attitude measure (De Houwer et al. 2015), makes up for exactly that limitation by presenting participants with full propositions expressing beliefs rather than loose concepts.

In this paper, we will present research which explores the RRT as a novel measure of language attitudes. In our study, we measure the social meaning of two varieties of Dutch in Belgium: Standard Belgian Dutch (SBD) and *tussentaal*, a more colloquial variety which, according to some, is spreading and may be competing with SBD in certain contexts (Grondelaers & Speelman 2013). It has been hypothesized that the rise of *tussentaal* is enabled by a new, modern type of dynamic prestige which competes with the traditional prestige of SBD. We use the RRT to check whether speakers indeed associate the two varieties with different types of prestige on an implicit level. We expect results to show an association between SBD and characteristics of traditional prestige like intelligence, wealth, seriousness and success, while *tussentaal* will be associated with features such as 'dynamic', 'cool' and 'entertaining'.

Alongside the RRT, which measures implicit associations, our study includes a more traditional explicit attitude measure in the form of semantic differentials. Here we expect to find the same positive ratings for traditional prestige for SBD. However, because *tussentaal* is still quite stigmatised in public discourse, this explicit measure may not generate any positive evaluations of the latter variety, even when it comes to modern prestige.

In addition to presenting the results of this study, our paper will reflect upon the usefulness of the RRT as a new measure for Cognitive Sociolinguists to study the cognitive, more specifically axiological representation of language variation.

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